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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses an analysis of adult-child social interactions to discover which instructional stimuli are effective in producing a classroom milieu rich in storytelling events. Ten fifth-grade students with low reading scores, eight black and two white, were tape-recorded over 8 weeks as they created stories in their journals and in classroom interactions in response to literature, to their own experiences, to the experiences of others, and to the teacher's questions. Out of 286 stories recorded, 156 were oral and spontaneous, 36 were spontaneous, but with an embedded narrative incident, and 101 were written in the form of books, poem-stories, or journal entries. Student stories were most often told in response to other students' stories, and the storytelling had a cumulative, reciprocal effect as students borrowed features from one another's stories. Teacher questioning about literature, writing, and storytelling was the second most productive stimulus for storytelling. To encourage what was believed to be the more relational learning style of black children, the children's narratives were allowed to flow conversationally whenever they arose during the story hour. Minority students have a great deal to contribute to the language development of nonminority students, and pedagogic strategies should be revised to build on rather than exclude cultural differences. Eight references are appended. (CJS)

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BUILDING SOCIOCENTRIC CLASSROOMS: WHAT ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS CAN TEACH US

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BUILDING SOCIOCENTRIC CLASSROOMS: WHAT ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS CAN TEACH US

Several years ago, as a teacher-researcher, I studied the language and literacy patterns of ten students, fifth graders in Eastern North Carolina. Eight of the students were working class black children; two were working class white children. All had been designated as low average achievers in diagnostic reading tests.

For eight weeks, I met separately with these children during their regular reading period. I wanted to determine whether or not the concept of Edward Hall (that white Americans are "captives" of monochronic thinking, in relation to time and space, and that members of ethnic minorities are, on the other hand, polychronic in their way of organizing time) related in any way to the theory posited by Cohen (1969), who had identified two styles of learning (analytical and relational) and had concluded that those who function with relational styles were more creative in the arts and that since Black children were exposed to a high degree of stimulation in the creative arts (growing out of the African heritage and the "performer" styles of the Black community), their learning style was likely to be relational in nature. If the theories were in any related, I hoped to learn what alternative teaching style would be most effectively pursued in conjunction with such supposed alternative learning style(s).

Since Heath (1982) had said that schools did not utilize the talents of such children as these, and Rosen (1982) had indicated that schools needed to incorporate more narrative events in the classroom(for all children), I decided to encourage storymaking (in talk, storytelling, and writing) as response to literature--in particular fiction in which characters kept journals and told stories and poetry, whenever possible, with these children whose lives had very likely had been steeped in an oral tradition (that of childhood generally, and in relation to those from Afro American families, that of a particular culture).

The children therefore listened to literature read aloud; they read, wrote

in their journals, talked and told stories as they interacted with one another and with me. And at no time were they encouraged to suppress or change the language patterns they brought into the classroom from their home and neighborhood environments; thus their talk, storytelling, and poetry was rich in the syntactical patterns of Black English.

Ultimately much of the classroom interaction produced a picture of the way cultural constructs could enrich, rather than place limitations on, a classroom setting. I have reported on this picture of children's storymaking in several studies (Boston University Conference on Language Development, 1989; AERA, 1990, Language Arts, 1990), and in this paper I will be discussing what an analysis of adult-child social interaction has revealed in relation to instructional stimuli and resulting storymaking events.

For this study I have reviewed the taped transcription of the eight week period, in order to classify the language patterns and situations and to investigate which interactions were most instrumental in producing storymaking and to discover where instances of richest stories occurred because I felt this knowledge would lead me to see which discourse processes were promoting learning and why, and to understand where the confluence or interaction of literature, talk, and story occurred and what it looked like when it occurred.

From a total corpus of 286 stories that the students created over an eight week period, there were 156 spontaneous, oral stories; 36 talk-stories (spontaneous talk in which there was an embedded but undeveloped story or narrative "incident") and 101 written stories, approximately twenty of which were part of book projects, the remainder of which were poem-stories or journal entries in which embedded stories occurred. But only seven of these written stories were "charted" along with the oral stories and the talk stories, since the others occurred as the result of a teacher directed activity, such as "Write at home in your journal tonight" or "It's journal writing time now; what will you be writing about today?" rather than indirectly as the result of a teacher, student, or literature stimulus.

Charting the stimulus and number of storymaking events for 192 stories helped me to see better where the students' production was at an optimum--and why.

Stimulus (16)		Storymaking Events (74)	Stories (192)
W	(Log stories viewed or read aloud by teacher or read aloud by teacher or students)	3	8
L	(Literature viewed or read aloud by teacher or students)	4	7
TCL	(Teacher Comment about Literature)	4	12
TCW	(Teacher Comment about Writing or the written story)	3	5
TCS	(Teacher Comment about Storying or the story that was told)	2	25
TQS	(Teacher Question about Storying or about the story told)	6	20
TQL	(Teacher Question about Literature)	9	32
TQW	(Teacher Question about Writing or about a written story)	6	27
TS	(Teacher Story)	2	2
SCL	(Student Comment about Literature)	0	0
SCW	(Student Comment about Writing or about a written story)	2	2
SCS	(Student Comment about Storying or about a story told)	2	2
SQL	(Student Question about Literature)	0	0
SQW	(Student Question about Writing or about a written story)	1	1
SQS	(Student Question about Storying or about a story told)	3	7
SS	(Student Story)	27	42

For example, SS, 27, 42, Student Story as stimulus, produced 27 storymaking events, but 42 stories in all, since some students took more than one turn at storying during the "event"; but TS, 2, 2, Teacher Story as stimulus, occurred only twice, producing two stories as response. In other words, students told stories more often than the teacher did, and when they did, these stories tended to spawn additional stories. At the same time, it is important that each teacher's story did yield at least one story response; it reveals that perhaps I might have told more stories and evoked more storying.

Other items on the chart that are worth noting: a zero response to Student Comment about Literature and Student Question about Literature does not mean that such "comments" yielded nothing; they yielded instead participatory discussion, however, rather than story events and stories.

Most important, for my purposes, is the finding of what stimulus produced the most story events and stories by students, since my objective was to produce a story-rich milieu. Student stories, for example, were most often told in response to Student Stories (twenty seven events resulting in forth two stories).

Next was TQL, Teacher Questioning about Literature, a stimulus which yielded nineinstances of story events, resulting in thirty two student stories. This was followed by TQW, Teacher Question about Writing, which yielded six instances of story events, resulting in twenty-seven stories. Then came TCS, Teacher Comment About Storying, yielding only two instances of story events, but resulting in twenty five stories. Finally was TQS, Teacher Questioning about Storying, which yielded six instances of storying events, resulting in twenty stories.

This talk and storytelling had an accumulative effect: each enabled students to produce more stories and when these stories emerged in story "chains," the learning was reciprocal in nature, the motive being sociocentric rather then egocentric. Students borrowed features (details, subjects, themes) of one another's stories; their stories also influenced subsequent stories, and literature and teacher questions about literature served as an additional influence, as the following description of one day, March 28, reveals.

We began this day by taking a look at all the books we had examined in which characters kept journals. I summarized a little about each and then asked the children to tell me ways the books were different from one another, as we discussed each. Their responses were explanatory rather than narrative in nature.

Teacher: In Sister, Dorothea's memory book, she's thinking back. How was it different from Dear Mr. Henshaw?
Stevie: Better, but it didn't have more pictures than Mr. Henshaw.
Teacher: What kind of pictures did you see in Sister?
Stevie: In the skull.
Teacher: "She leaned on the windowsill" (reading). The pictures are in her head, in her skull.

After journal time, the students shared entries. Abby's entry was a poem she had composed after reading a descriptive scene in Sister. Cory responded with a question that connected with my previous question (what kind of pictures had they seen in Sister?). He wanted to know when she saw the picture. (Cory to Abby: "When you were writing that poem did you see it when you were writing it down?") Abby responded that she oculd see the lights and the colors in Greenfield's scene

(an explanatory rather than narrative response, so I have not charted it here as talk-story). I went on to suggest that others might also wish to create poem-stories in their journals and to ask Rob what he was thinking about during writing time (since I noticed he was not writing). Rob explained that he couldn't think of anything to write about, so I asked if we had suggestions for him. (TQW: What do you do when you can't think of anything to write?)

Cory launched into talk-story ("I make up something and when I make it up I go right back to something that happened the day before . . .") and then immediately into a story of riding his bike and crashing into a fence and then imagining at the same time, "something about me riding my bike with my brother," which leads him more deeply into the story of this imaginary crash (during the real one), a story within a story, arising out of talk-story. This is followed by an interchange between Cory and me (I ask if that's what he wrote about; he confirms it). I follow up with a question posed to the group at large. TQW: Do you suppose that people who make up stories base them on what they really do? Cory responds with an explanatory-anecdote about a moviehe saw ("it was fiction but it really happened").

My response is a story of my own:

> The other day I couldn't think of anything to write about and I asked my little boy to ask me some questions. And he said, What was your favorite movie when you were a kid? And I said, Snow White, and I started writing a story about a princess then, and she had some of the things happen to her that I've had happen to me.

He chimes in with talk-story (a comment with a strong seed of story if he wanted to let it grow): "Like sometimes when I was smaller, I dreamed I was Hulk." Cory is connecting to my story in a very subtle way; he understands the "deep structure" of my story: that <u>Snow White</u> was my favorite movie then because I could dream I was Snow White (just as he dreamed he was Hulk).

Rob, on the other hand, connects with the surface structure of Cory's response: with a story, the stimulus for which is Cory's "story" or Cory's word "dreaming":

> I'll be dreaming and then it'll go out of my mind and then the next day, when I get up, I'll be doing something and I'll be dreaming like I was riding my bike and then a car came by and I stopped jumping a ramp and

> I would have dreamed that that night and the next day it really happens. That's happened a lot to me.

But Rob's story is not a superficial response: it ties everything together that we have been talking about this day: Cory's earlier story about how he makes up stories about his experiences, his bike riding experience, his dreaming, his creating. And logically so: it is for Rob that we originally began this exchange. It is for him that we have been wondering what we can do when we can't think of anything to write. And in these stories are many answers to the question: storymaking is a way of sorting out, explaining, making sense of things, all the reasons that we write and tell stories. And this way of storying to discover what we can story about is telling us that storymaking is a communal process--a social collaboration. We tell to others and for others; we tell to share and to make meaning together. We tell to learn what we need to know more about.

And we are by no means finished with the need to story here. Hattie enters the dialogue next. Latching on to the concept of dreaming, she connects to Rob's thoughts about dreaming, with a story of similar danger from passing cars (and a similar idea of premonition):

> I'll be dreaming and my Mama be talking to me but I don't hear and my Mama say 'Girl! Girl! What's wrong with you?' Then I be going outside and this dog, he just came to our yard and we didn't know him. He was real friendly and stuff. Then my brother he was mean to him. We was outside playing and I had daydreamed there was a car coming down and I had daydream this and I was across the street and that dog used to always bother me and I ran across the street. Then they said, 'Dog! Stop! Stop!' They was yelling out to the dog and a car was coming and it was killed. And I said I daydreamed it before. I said, 'Oh, this is scary.'

But she is also connecting to another one of my earlier questions: Do you suppose that people who make up stories base them on what they really do? Hattie is certainly answering the question as she weaves her story; at the same time, she is introducing an intriguing idea about premonition, an idea springing from Rob's earlier story on this subject and from the implied fear in Cory's story that he might be riding with his brother at some point and he might crash.

Thus her reiteration of our story "theme" this day--of the ability of real experiences to simulate imaginary ones--branches off now into a child's fear of her "magical" powers, a branching off that Cory takes up next:

> Sometimes I be looking at TV and my eyes be wide open and I be thinking about something and my mother come in there and pop me in the head and I think about it and I go outside and I was thinking about my brother getting in trouble cause I thought he was going to get in a fight. (When my brother gets in a fight, my left eye jumps) My left eye jumped and I went over to the little girl in the other house and he [Cory's brother] was fighting a boy named Shawn.

Just as Hattie's story has been an influence for Cory's, his serves as the next story-stimulus for Stevie, who relates his own story about his mother:

> I was laying there and I was asleep. My Mama she knock on the door. I said, 'Who is it?' Then I thought I was a wolf and I woke up.

Obviously Stevie's story is linked to Cory's on a very superficial level; yet Cory "answers" it with a new story that builds on Stevie's image of knocking, to produce something more serious and subtle: fears of the unknown, parental suspicions, possible punishment, all the seeds of story for children weaving narrations of child culture:

> When you outside and you knock on somebody's door and they don't come to the door, you get this feeling like somebody's coming or you hear the TV on and then when you're sitting in a room by yourself and you doing something bad and your mother comes and says, 'Why you all so quiet?' And I say, 'I don't know.'

Mona picks up on the idea of sounds and uneasiness (of tone or mood in story) from Cory's piece:

> Sometimes I play my Atari and I leave it on and if I go to bed I hear that pattern.

Hattie, on the other hand, enters with a throwback to Stevie's earlier dreaming of a wolf. Her story is about dreaming--about Stevie:

> When Stevie came back into our group, I had dreamed about that at night.

(For several days, Stevie had been prohibited from attending our sessions by his regular teacher, a punishment for his involvement in a fistfight at lunchtime. The children had been upset both by the fight and Stevie's punishment and had spent some time storying in our sessions about it.)

Stevie enters with a story seemingly unconnected to anything before it at this point (except for the bedtime setting which has been part of several

of these stories of dreams and dreaming). At the same time, it is deeply connected to Hattie's remark or talk-story, which revealed her strong concern for him. His story, simply about himself, appears to say: Thanks for thinking of me; I can see you care about me. Therefore I'm just tell a story about me.

> My Mama has some chickens. When they crow, I crow like them. I was laying in bed and I wasn't asleep and I got up and then I went back to bed. I was laying there and I read some poems. And then I crow. My Mama was sick so she didn't hear me.

Because Stevie's story seems to have many avenues for exploration and because it seems to be a good place to pause, I begin to bring things to a close for this part of the hour, saying to the students, "You could write about these experiences in your journals." But no, Cory has already seized upon the words "got up" in Stevie's story, and he is off and running with a story that has all the loose threads of our story chain tightly woven into it--fears, dreaming, parental constraints, imaginings, his sibling rivalry, the suspenseful mood, the nighttime setting, the need to tell stories:

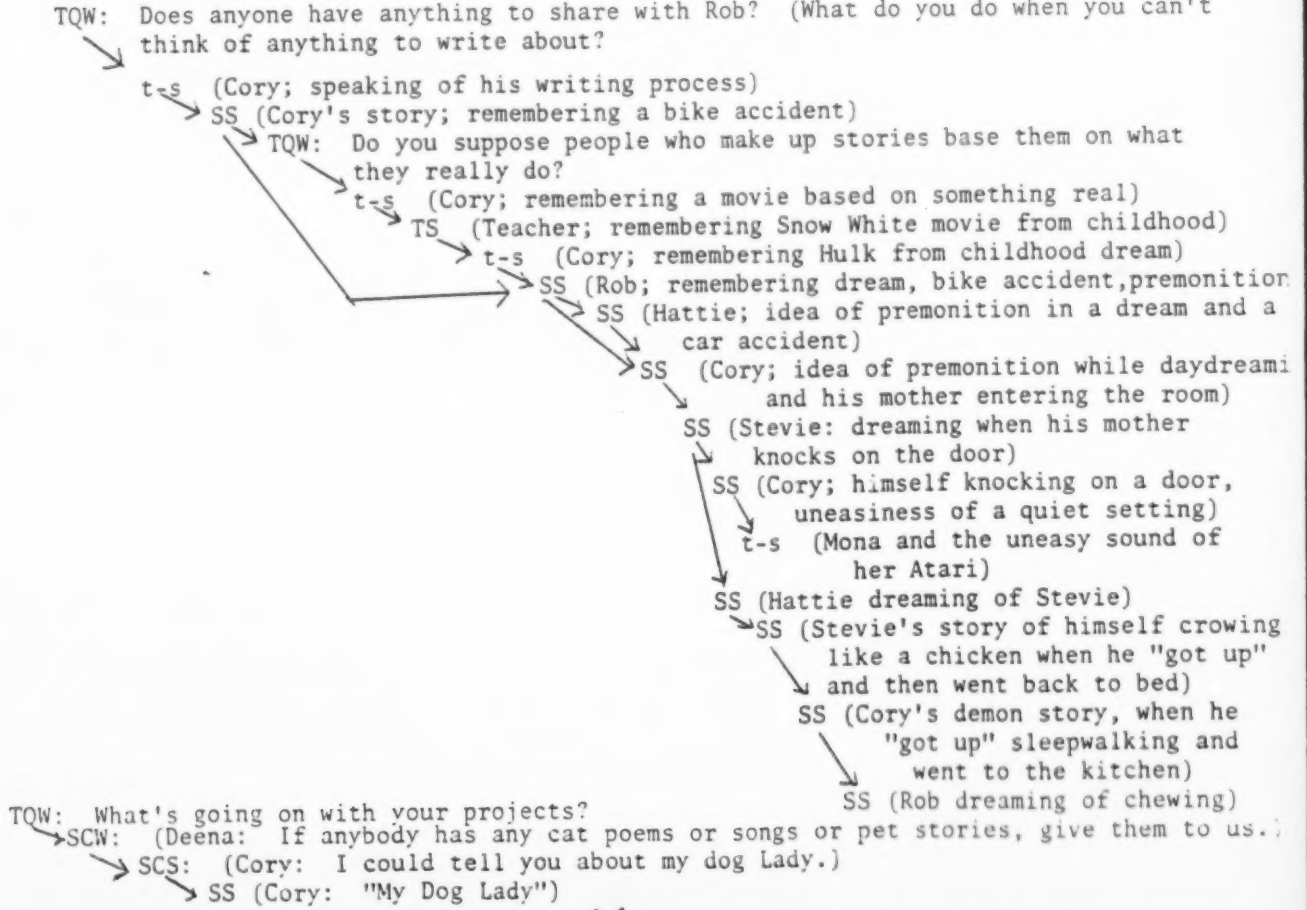
> Last night I got up in my sleep and I started walking in the kitchen and I kept hitting all these walls and it was like I was in a box. I was hitting all these walls. This morning I was doing something in the refrigerator and I turned around and I thought it was someone looking at me from behind. And I said, 'Who is that?' With my eyes closed. And nobody answered and I said, 'You all better come out. I'm going get my Daddy too. And nothing come out and I opened up my eyes. I said, 'No, what I'm doing out here? And I was getting cold. I went back to my room. My brother looked at me like he was a demon or something. I said, 'Ma!' And then she hit me on the head and I woke up and she said, 'What you doing in my bed, boy?' And I said, 'My brother in there scaring me acting like a demon and when I went in there my brother was going 'Grrrr,' and he scared me and I wanted to do something bad.

Cory will later develop this same story into a much longer response to a TQL, Teacher Question about Literature, when we begin reading Little House in the Big Woods and I ask, "Have you ever been in a situation where you thought you were in severe danger of being killed--where you thought to yourself, 'This is it?" and "Have you ever been really frightened and found out that you were just imagining it?" Our story chain this day and this shorter version prepare him well for his longer story, and his first draft rounds out our talk. Rob has

just one more go at a story, telling how one night he was dreaming and was chewing in his dream, afterwhich he woke up chewing, his connection to Cory's story perhaps arising in Cory's mention of a refrigerator.

Now I ask for progress reports on the projects that students are working on. Cory reads a poem he has constructed on the story-base of Michael Jackson's "Thriller." Stevie remarks on his ongoing work about chickens (an information book). Deena and Tonette, who are collaborating on a book about cats, ask if others would like to contribute to the book with cat poems or songs or pet stories. Cory states that he could tell what happened to his dog Lady. The students then move into smaller groups to work on books, to tape stories, conference, draw. Cory's telling of "My Dog Lady," is the last story of this session, March 28, a directional "charting" of which appears below:

3/28


TQW: Does anyone have anything to share with Rob? (What do you do when you can't think of anything to write about?
t-s (Cory; speaking of his writing process)
SS (Cory's story; remembering a bike accident)
TQW: Do you suppose people who make up stories base them on what they really do?
t-s (Cory; remembering a movie based on something real)
TS (Teacher; remembering Snow White movie from childhood)
t-s (Cory; remembering Hulk from childhood dream)
SS (Rob; remembering dream, bike accident,premonition
SS (Hattie; idea of premonition in a dream and a car accident)
SS (Cory; idea of premonition while daydreami and his mother entering the room)
SS (Stevie: dreaming when his mother knocks on the door)
SS (Cory; himself knocking on a door, uneasiness of a quiet setting)
t-s (Mona and the uneasy sound of her Atari)
SS (Hattie dreaming of Stevie)
SS (Stevie's story of himself crowing like a chicken when he "got up" and then went back to bed)
SS (Cory's demon story, when he "got up" sleepwalking and went to the kitchen)
SS (Rob dreaming of chewing)
TQW: What's going on with your projects?
SCW: (Deena: If anybody has any cat poems or songs or pet stories, give them to us.)
SCS: (Cory: I could tell you about my dog Lady.)
SS (Cory: "My Dog Lady")

"When I was four years old," Cory began telling a small group of students in one corner of the room, "I had a dog named Lady.

She was white, small, had blue eyes that sometimes would change colors--like green or red. I liked to play with her a lot, but I liked to throw rocks at her too. And then my mother said, 'How come you hit that precious dog?'

I said, 'I don't know.' And she took me, she got ready to spank me. And Lady comes in there and barks at my mother and jumps at her like she doesn't want me to get a spanking. That's why I loved Lady.

My mother took me and she was going to spank me again. But Lady came in there and barked at my mother, and I looked at Lady. And she looked at me and her eyes changed color.

But I still liked to throw rocks at her. And I would play with her. And I was sitting on the porch and I had her on my lap and I was cuffing her on the head. And she got mad cause I had hit her on the head too hard. And I started throwing rocks at her again. And she kind of glared like, and I kind of glared like. And then I jumped on the floor and I hugged her.

And I had this chair and it was a pretty chair. So I gave it to Lady because not too many people sit in it, cause it was mine, and I didn't let nobody but Lady sit in it. I let my brother sit in it but nobody but my brother and my dog Lady. I loved her very much.

And I gave her that chair and she didn't let anyone sit in it. The only person she let sit in it was me. And me and her sit together and that's why I loved Lady, cause she was nice to me and I was nice to her.

And she was nice when I kept throwing rocks at her. She still kept saving me from getting a spanking. And so I just stopped throwing rocks. And I took her out on the porch and I patted her on the head. And I held her. And I held her on my lap hugging her, and her eyes started turning green and red. And she started smiling.

And I was playing ball with her and I threw it at a tree and it bounced back and hit the street and it went out in the street and this dude was coming by in a Trans Am and it hit Lady cause Lady ran out there and tried to get the ball and the car ran over her. She was crushed.

And that's why I ain't got Lady right now--to this very day.
I ain't got Lady anymore.

In telling this story, in reshaping his experiences to make a meaningful design of them so that he examines more closely his own personal value constructs and thus clarifies them, Cory also reveals more about the cultural constructs he is exploring--and clarifying--with language as his tool. Here both the story structure and shape reveal that one way an Afro American child may be adjusting

to the larger Western culture in which he lives is through internalizing the language and literature of this wider world.

As Roger Abrahams (1970) has identified and compared African/Afro American and Western musical styles, the former is characterized by circular organization, repetition of sound and movement for involving listeners, short units leading to a succession of mini climaxes, retreat from closure, and the latter by linear progression and movement driving toward closure, with repetition used only for intensifying tension ("and that why I loved Lady"). Interestingly, however, Cory's story manages to incorporate elements of both these styles. The tension of polarities (conscience and mischief, irresponsibility and self awareness) move back and forth with a series of mini climaxes that work to involve and increase the tension and to delay closure), as they are held within the larger frame of a life and death plot that is, at the same time, moving subtly toward closure.

In enumerating the basic assumptions Hilliard (1976) has made concerning human behavioral styles, Hale-Benson states that the analytic and the relational styles are extreme ends of a continuum and that a "'gifted' person is one who has integrated and harmonized the different styles within himself or herself to focus one harmonized "style"(44). If, as she also says, "styles are the framework from which one views the world," then we might assume, looking at Cory's story, that he is somehow forming and integrated view of the world or perhaps that storying is helping him to form this integrated view, helping him to sort out the incongruities, helping him to create, in his story structure, a way to integrate two opposing styles, polarities of which can be seen in many of the story interactions of the class.

Hilliard, for example, defines these analytical and relational categories by describing them oppositionally: fact driven versus theme or idea driven; logical versus phychic (compare Bruner's logico-scientific versus narrative modes of language transmission and learning and Heath's study of Maintown and Trackton children and their different propensities toward the expository versus the narrative modes); egocentric versus sociocentric, convergent and divergent, controlled and

expressive, direct versus indirect (compare Hall's notion of high and low context cultures), linear/patterned (compare Hall's notion of monochronic and polychronic time schemes), isolated/integrated, constant/evolving, mechanistic (fact driven versus humanistic or people centered) [41].

These relational aspects I saw played out often in the interactions of the students. One day, for example, when the children had just returned from a class trip to a nearby historic town, I asked them to tell me about their day, and the result was a burst of excited talk and stories (talk-stories), and once again several examples of these aspects of relational learning style. Notice the concentration on internal relationships and the emphasis on inner feelings and personal actions in the following interchange.

TCS: I thought that since we didn't have our class on Friday, we'd just catch up today, and you'd tell me what happened on your trip to Bath. Maybe we'd see a story in it.
Hattie: We rode on a boat.
Mona: Danny got left on the boat.
Hattie: It was funny. Mrs. Hill said Danny! Danny!
Rob: We saw where a tornado went through the woods.
Abby: We were talking we might die or something like that on the bus, the ferry would turn over or like that or the bus would be too heavy and Emily, she said goodbye to everybody. Goodbye Abby. She just got up and said goodbye to everybody. That was funny.
Tonette: We fed the pigeons.
Hattie: We went to a graveyard and I was scared.
Jana: It was an old church.
Rob: Cory was dancing on the graves.
Hattie: On the stones.
Stevie: Those people gonna come out and haunt you.
Teacher: Remember what Cory said before he took the trip, that he'd go past a graveyard and that ghosts would spring up from the graves!
Rob: Tonette rang this big bell at the church.
Tonette: Real loud! Ding! Ding!
Hattie: I know I was scared on the water in the ferry. It had a bus up there and a van up there. Cars.
Mona: The ferry was big.
Tonette: The water was dirty.
Rob: When we were getting ready to get on the ferry, me and Henry would go out there to the duck and we tried to chase it.
Abby: We were going to leave Bath on the ferry. After I came back to the school, I went to the beauty parlor.
Stevie: I went to my Dad's workshop.

Many seeds of story were apparent here: preoccupations with danger and death, history and old things, fears of being left behind. And each "story"

contributed to the steady stream of oral narratives the children were producing as a collaborative venture, a story they were unfolding that day with some sense of expectation that we would all be exploring and something dramatic and important together. Most children took several turns in the sequence and some--Deena, Jeremy, and Cory--were supportive listeners but took no turn at verbalizing. Taken together, however, these brief, individual narratives can be read as a total story woven by the day's experience and their retelling of it--their remaking of it--for me and one another as audience.

In fact, our entire class, our eight week session, could be similarly read as a story that stood as frame and scaffolding of this day's story. From the earliest days of the class, Cory had spoken of "being" or "becoming" Michael Jackson (reading from his journal on February 29, he said, "I was walking past the graveyard with Ola Ray singing 'Thriller,' and I turned into a monster and started dancing with the other monsters). As the weeks went by, Mona wrote poems and created a scrapbook about Michael Jackson, Jeremy wrote poems about Mona and Cory being fans of him, Cory created his own 'Thriller' poem and a series of demon stories; then on April 13, when Abby announced to me that they were going to Bath on Friday the 13th, Cory whispered for all to hear: "I'm gonna tell you what's gonna happen on Friday 13th. Our bus is gonna crash by a church that's surrounded by a graveyard and a lot of dead people will rise up!"

In the climax to this evolving drama that Cory had set in motion and had continued to "script" suspensefully, he virtually "became" Michael in a daylight 'Thriller' scene of the class trip, a scene that was waiting essentially to be "written" now that the children had produced this bare-bones collective version of it. Who would be the one to author it, I wondered, as I glanced around the room during writing time.

Jeremy was composing poems as usual; this day he was writing about the ferry ride. Deena was making a precise record of her day at Bath in her journal, as her social studies teacher had asked the students to do. Stevie was drawing.

Abby was writing a story about her afterschool experience at the beauty shop. Hattie, Jana, and Tonette were writing about Bath, each about something different, but in sociocentric ways. Glancing at one another's journals, thinking back, remembering, they wrote separately--but together. Hattie told of the flowers around the old house, "dark like velvet, yellow and purple,"and of an old clock. "200 hundred years old! I couldn't believe that clock was still ticking!. Tonette described an old woman "messing in her pocketbook" so that she couldn't hear the words of the film they watched when they arrived. "Bath,it was surely boring!" she wrote. And Jana produced a poem:

> Bath, N.C. is a nice place to be
> When we were there we saw wonderful things
> Things so ancient, things so old!
> Some were getting very bored.

Mona, Cory, and Rob were not writing, so we gathered together at a far corner of the room to talk. "Is there one part of the day that you'd want to tell people about?" I asked. Mona told us that no one had been home that day for her to tell about the trip. This day seemed to be the first day she had had any chance to remember--and share. Rob seemed bursting to retell all the new facts his parents had shared with him when he returned to tell about his day. So Mona,with no one to talk to, and Rob, with too much to tell, linked up this day to produce a story in two voices, his often analytical and fact driven, hers quite often relational, and the two colliding when the relational and the analytical formed a common theme. He began:

> My parents said when they went to Bath once with me when I was really young that it was said that at one place there's this footprint with this horse where they saw a ghost and the horse jumped up so high that it came down on the ground and that place has been there ever since then cause it scared him so much he just jumped up and went down on the ground and it's still there.

She entered in:

> I saw this grave and this man, he died when he was about 67, and this lady, she was his wife. She died when she was real young and they had a son. He died when he was three years old.

Rob:

Here's the church. Here's the man. Here's the women. [He draws a picture.]

I told my parents something funny that happened. We went in this room; it didn't have any of the ropes around it, so you could touch stuff and this boy, a boy named Fred in our class, touched the bed and mashed it down real hard and the lady said, "No! Don't touch that! It might cave in. He pulled his ahnds off. That was real funny.

Mona:

We signed our name.

Mona:

Me and Cory was dancing on the grave and Danny got left on the bc He was in the boy's bathroom, and he came down running, saying 'Wait! Wait!'

Rob:

Mrs. Fenton was going around and she came up with 23 but we had 24 people and then she was saying I hope I'm counting right.

Mona:

And then Henry said, 'Where is Danny?'

Rob:

And then Mrs. Hill was saying, 'Danny! Danny! Danny! And then we saw him coming down. He said he was scared cause when we were driving up, you have to give it a lot of gas. It makes this real loud noise like a rumble. BRUMMMM Real loud and then he was scared. He didn't know what it was.

Mona:

The bathroom was wet. They just painted the wall. Everybody got paint on their clothes. Jana did. Tonette did. I didn bugs were on the wall.

Rob: Tobacco spit was all over the floor of the bus.

Mona: We had to wipe it off the seats.

Suddenly I asked (TQW): Where does a writer start when getting ready to start a story? The very first thing that happens that day?

Mona went first:

Cory and me dancing on the grave would come first.

Would that be a good place to start? I asked then. (TQS) Tell me that scene. Let me imagine it.

But Robentered in more quickly than she this time:

A house we went to was built in the 1700's and the two women lived there and they got these diamonds and they wanted to test them out and see if they were real and these little windows on the side of the door, they tested the diamonds on the window to see if they were real. And it's still there! What they wrote.

Mona:

Their name and the date.

Mona:

We were in the graveyard;
we didn't have a tourguide
with us. Mrs. Hill said we
were supposed to go to a
graveyard and the lady said it w
just around the corner. We
went over there.
We got lost first, then we found
our way back.

Rob:

I saw where the Governor lived back then and we saw where Blackbeard lived too. In the water were two rivers and they connected in the middle and then there were two parts of water and they didn't quite meet. Blackbeard lived on the left and the Governor lived on the right.

Mona:

Those people in the graveyard went in the church. We just opened the door and ran in the graveyard and Len, he was acting crazy! He put his knees on the ground and arms were going up and down and he said, 'Praise the Lord!' Mrs. Fenton made him get up. Then we went in there and we saw some pictures of somebody. Then we walked downstairs and closed the door. Tonette was ringing that bell and everybody came out there. Mrs. Hill said it was time to go. She told me to close the church door. Then Cory started. He said, 'I wonder if Michael Jackson came out here and did 'Thriller,' I wonder what all these dead people would do. Cory said, 'Watch this! I'm gonna dance on the graves. Then it was time for us to go. so we dancedonto the bus and got in.

Thus she finished the story he began, and Cory finished it with them--danced a little to show me more (to fill in the blank spaces of her story). But only a little This day he pulled back, told no story, did not even write anything. Instead he sat quietly by this day as supportive, sociocentric listener, helping Mona to tell hers (sat basking in the egocentric joy of his own performance. He was the story.) In bringing his own special fantasy to life in Bath, he was telling a story--another kind of story in which movement became language. Dancing (motion, gesture) told his story then--as he relived it--just as metaphor (Cory as the 'Thriller' monster) became the supporting structure of the story plot he was weaving as the class evolved.

"The Day We Went to Bath," as I came to think of it, was therefore a bright, collage picture-story I saw and heard, in bits and pieces, that day of April 16, a story-quilt of a journey the children made and their ultimate destination as storytellers remembering. And in stories such as this one, I saw an energy, a

vibrant, expressive tone that I might not have seen had I been working with a group of children for which the analytical style was the majority "rule." In such a setting, children like Cory, Tonette, Mona, Jana, Hattie, and Stevie, might have been less apt to exhibit their own expressive styles; their cultural uniqueness might easily have been suppressed or entirely silenced. Analytical products might easily outshown this relational process, had I been adhering to expectations of a traditional curriculum.

As it was, I made space in my daily hour for story, allowing children's narratives to flow as conversation, whenever they arose naturally , in order to provide for the momentum of story chaining when it began to emerge; in other words, I moved from a rigid, monochronic, time-scheduled, schema, to a more fluid poly-chronic way of viewing time--and teaching. For children need time to discover what they need to tell about. And they find this time as they listen to one another tell stories and as they make meaningful connections (find cognitive and affective ways of bonding to one another's ideas and concerns--a cooperative rather than competitive endeavor).

Allowing these children to build a sociocentric classroom community and allowing them to teach me how I could assist them to do so, enabled me to see better how the language in which these children composed could grow and develop as they continued to tell their stories and to build on the multi-dimensional possibilities of one another's competencies, which, in turn, influenced the richness of the story "chaining."

Examining more closely their stories, in order to establish a theory about cultural diversity and classroom instruction, I was thus able to conclude that those of a plural society or one as Scafe (1989) states, that is culturally fragmented (or filled with diversity, as is the society of Afro American children), have a plural vision that remains inherent in the art forms they generate. And the plural culture of the black child, operating in American society may be, in its way, as "multilayered" and "multidimensional" as the adult Caribbean artists Scafe

has studied; thus the stories of the black child have the potential to be, at their optimum development, as "prismatic," and as reflective "of endless possibilities and meanings" (92) as Scafe's black artists were.

If it is true that "gifted" people are those who have successfully integrated different learning styles within themselves, then it is very likely that there will be no truly gifted children until we have allowed minority children to share and extend their talents with classmates who have a great deal to learn from them. Minority students have a great deal to contribute to the language development of non minority studnets. If pedagogic strategies for literacy instruction are revised to build on, rather than to exclude cultural differences, all students will benefit.

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